



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## FACT SHEET

### SAN DIEGO CITY BEACHES GET HIGH MARKS IN LATEST INDEPENDENT REPORT CARD

#### *75% OF CITY'S WATERFRONT AREAS RECEIVE "A" GRADES*

#### "FALSE POSITIVE" TESTS MAY HAVE CAUSED SUMMER POLLUTION CONCERNS

The vast majority of the City of San Diego's beaches received high marks in the Beach Report Card issued this week by Heal the Bay, a Los Angeles-based environmental organization.

Thirty of the forty beaches analyzed by Heal the Bay during the summer season this year received either an "A" or "A+" grade in the Beach Report Card.

Heal the Bay based their grades on water quality test results recorded by the San Diego County Department of Environmental Health (DEH) between Memorial Day and September 30 of this year.

Grade	All Beaches (40)	Percentage	Grade	Mission Bay (17)	Percentage
A+	17	42.5 %	A+	5	29.41 %
A	13	32.5 %	A	4	23.52 %
B	2	5.0 %	B	1	5.88 %
C	4	10.0 %	C	4	23.52 %
D	3	7.5 %	D	2	11.76 %
F	1	2.5 %	F	1	5.88 %

While the majority of San Diego beaches fared well in the report card, some of the City's water front was down-graded for test results indicating high pollution counts at varying times during the sampling period. The City was forced to close a portion of East Mission Bay in July because of high bacteria counts recorded by the County.

Following one of the most extensive water quality investigations ever undertaken by the City, it was determined that the County's testing procedures may have produced "false positive" readings for harmful bacteria and that some of the beach closures in Mission Bay may have been avoided with better testing procedures.

As of September 1st, DEH suspended the use of the test it had previously used to measure the most harmful bacteria in ocean and bay water quality samples.

According to County officials, DEH took this action after it determined that this test may not always provide an accurate measurement of E. Coli bacteria concentrations in marine waters like Mission Bay.

The County's new information suggests that some of the elevated bacterial levels observed in east Mission Bay during July and August of this year may have been false positives and not true measurements of the E. Coli/ fecal coliform indicator bacteria that are used in state law and regulations to make determinations about the safety of water contact.

"We appreciate and respect the efforts undertaken by the County to clarify and validate their testing procedures. While these 'false positives' may have been to blame for some of the readings, I remain convinced that closing Mission Bay for a short time this summer was the right thing to do. The City will always act with an abundance of caution when it comes to the health and safety of those visiting our beaches."

**Mayor Jerry Sanders**

At Mayor Sanders' direction, City staff immediately began a comprehensive evaluation of the entire sewer and water outfall systems throughout east Mission Bay following the initial closure announcement made this past summer.

That evaluation was recently completed and did not yield any evidence of a cause or condition that would account for the high bacteria readings recorded by the County.

Previous studies conducted by outside consultants have shown that most elevated bacteria readings in Mission Bay are caused by animal wastes including bird droppings.

During the most recent evaluation effort the City chose to examine the public and private sewage lines around east Mission Bay and did not find any evidence of leaks or breaks in the lines.

The City also inspected each of the creek outlets feeding into east Mission Bay, again finding nothing that would account for the elevated bacteria counts in the Bay itself.

Every comfort station, sewage pump facility and the septage discharge systems used by recreational vehicles was also given a thorough review yielding no evidence of leaks or points of contamination.